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FORMER AGENT PREDICTS CHANGES IN SOVIET UNION
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The United States needs to begin looking at the Soviet Union as a diverse population rather than the monolithic empire painted by the Reagan administration, a former KGB agent says.

Despite his criticism of the U.S. image of the Soviet Union, Vladimir Sakharov said Friday the perception in the U.S.S.R. of the United States is even worse.

"The leadership lives in total isolation," he said in an interview. "They don't see their own people. They see very little that happens in the rest of the world. They put out propaganda and little by little they begin to believe their own propaganda."

The United States must begin looking at the Soviets from a different perspective, Sakharov said.

"The Soviets don't understand what freedom is. If you ask a Russian on the street what is more important, he'll say order. They don't have a concept of freedom."

Sakharov suggested increasing academic and cultural exchange between the countries by 2,000 percent.

"They're starving for American culture and we cut them off because we have been very biased," he said.

"The Soviet Union is not any more a monolithic, political, ideological evil empire that is portrayed by the Reagan administration. It's a country of great diversity with a lot of new socio-economic trends that demand that we study the Soviet Union not to satisfy the current ideology of the administration ... but more objectively."

More emphasis also must be placed on education in the United States, he said.

"Instead of building the MX (missile) system, why don't we put the money in education -- or we're going to bring up a nation of international illiterates."

Sakharov also said the Soviet Union will experience internal changes over the next 20 years as the country's Islamic minority grows in number and wealth.

Islamics living in southeast areas of the country will be the majority of U.S.S.R residents within 20 years because of their high birthrate, he said.

"There will be fascinating demographic changes" caused by the ethnic group's increasing numbers, with a major change occurring in the military because of the country's compulsory draft, he said.

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"Where are their loyalties going to be -- with their ethnic backgrounds or with the Communist Party in Moscow, which they loathe?" Sakharov said. "The Communist Party has always been something alien imposed on their family structure."

Sakharov, who is writing a book about the Soviet minorities as a visiting scholar at Stanford University, was a double-agent until July 1971 -- when he spotted a bouquet of flowers in the rear window of a Volkswagen parked on a Kuwaiti street -- a CIA signal that he was in trouble.

Although there has been no love lost between Russians and their Islamic countrymen, there will never be a civil war between the two groups because of the government's control, Sakahrov said.

The more subtle changes will occur as the Islamics improve their standard of living through agriculture production while the standard of living of Russians falls as the Soviet government concentrates on catching up with U.S. star wars technology, he said.